826 [764] [763] [754] [752] [845]

As to the gross structure of the body, some persons learned about the skeleton when, in preparing corpses for cremation, the undertaker stripped the decaying flesh from the bones, usually in the presence of relatives and spectators of all ages. Occasional autopsies because of suspected sorcery, and surgical removal of a fetus from a deceased mother by caesarian section led to some knowledge of organs and blood vessels. Male and female masseurs of considerable competence were trained in the Chinese neuro-muscular system. A system of "origins," e.g. that the elbow-origin was in the arm pit, and the chest originated at the spine, might relate to the Chinese concept of linkage points on the body, in particular, acupuncture. In Bang Chan's popular conceptualization, the protecting skin which enclosed the body was thin at the top of the head and especially so at the stomach area. An old image also persisted that the body cavity itself was a relatively undivided space extending from neck to pelvis. Inside the cavity, food dropped from the top, faeces packed down at the bottom. Through the body curculated slowly the blood, several kinds of water (nām) (McF. 453) e.g., the nām khram (refuse-water) (ibid. 453) in the abdomen; and several winds (lom) (ibid. 428) e.g., the pushing lom bēng (ibid. 487), and the pulling lom chewat (ibid. 287). The small hair-whorls noted on the head, hip, or shoulder were construed as minor vortices of these currents, or as souls (khwan).

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Foremost in people's minds were the elemental constituents of the body. The human body, along with every animal, plant, or mineral in the world, was made up of 4 elements (thāt): earth, fire, water, and wind (air).[10] This ancient four-fold view, also familiar to the Greeks, had mixed in Bang Chan with the traditional five-element Chinese system (metal, earth, fire, water, wood) because gold, iron, and wood were also spoken of as constitutional elements, and there may have been others. Some persons said that the proportions of the 4 major elements were the same for everyone, others, that they varied for different temperaments, which were also affected by the presence or absence of elements other than the basic 4.

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10. "The body, comprising about a bushel of powdery earth-element, is held together by half a bushel of juicy water-element, and propped up by the windy-element. The fiery element digests what is eaten or drunk and preserves the body". (Visuddhi-Magga. [Warren:157-158]).

People used their knowledge of food properties to ameliorate their physical condition. During lactation, for instance, women ate vegetables or not "depending on the condition of the baby," for breast milk was very easily affected by adverse properties. In the broader context of general dietary needs, people entertained ideas about the suitability of certain foods to certain ages, sexes, occupations, conditions, and occasions (Hauck, et al: 42-50). Nevertheless, persons often risked an undesirable effect in food for pleasure. The proper banana variety for ritual use was the tiny kluai nam, yet it was not planted much in Bang Chan because the people "did not like the taste." They substituted the "pleasant-tasting" kluai nam wā. Here orthodoxy came off second. The heat of alcoholic drink relished by men and older women often pressed the margin of safe temperature control. The cobra--turtle--or chicken--plua--alcohol feasts exemplified how readily the elders gambled even on the increment of sin from eating meat, or risked an over-heated temper, for the joy of eating such cherished delicacies.

Food dislikes, if temporary, reflected an imbalance of elements; if usual, an individual constitutional set of the person's elements. To eat disliked food was therefore positively harmful. To urge someone to eat disliked food was wrong.[16]

Illness

All illness, anxiety, and soul loss was caused by intrusions from outside the body. The intrusion might be from a supernatural source (wiset:powerful) or natural (tām thammachāt) (Textor:10) but in either case the result was the same: disruption of the elements. Anxiety, whether caused by a social situation such as fear of frustration, by a broken bone or by a fever, also was a disruption of balance. An attack by the supernatural disease missile, "khun"[17] gave rise to the classic symptoms of wind-excess: "a man cried all the time and had flatulency." Elements were also disorganized by spirit attack. The victim suffered hysteria, paroxysm, flatulence, convulsion,

16. Phillips (p. 55) reported that parents did not give their child a disliked medicine because "it offends him.... It is better not to give it to him than hurt his feelings."

17. This small skin missile invaded the body and then expanded to the size of a buffalo. Intentional attack (sorcery) might kill; accidental, merely pained (cf. Textor:118-127). Suspected khun was one of the few reasons why a family would authorize so grave a violation of the body of a deceased member as an autopsy.

Sometimes these aberrancies were viewed as desirable sources of supernatural power, but on other occasions, they were seen as a sign of demerit, caused embarrassment, and were suffocated at once (if alive), and buried. 845 847

If a woman died pregnant, her body was at once brought to the temple where the unborn child was removed surgically. The usual solacing sermon, rites "to lead the deceased to live in her right place in the next world," and cremation took place, with the fetus laid beside its mother so that it "would come out normally." The mother and child were separated to prevent a ghost which was double-powered. No prayers were chanted at home before exsection "lest they make the power of the spirit stronger." Moreover, any violent or premature death caused an angry ghost. The ghost of a premature child had a heavy load of sin, for its stay in purgatory, where sin was worked off, had been interrupted (Textor:262). An unscrupulous mɔ̄ was eager to get possession of any ghost for use in sorcery, and a double ghost was stronger than any other. Ghosts were obtained by plundering the mortuary chambers of the temple prior to cremation. By feeding (liang) it, a mɔ̄ controlled it. The ghost of a male infant was preferable because it was "stronger than that of a female." In the light of this situation, not only should the body of a pregnant woman never be left alone " so that no one can get at them (sic)," but a pregnant woman herself ought not to be alone.[26] The behavior towards the Rice Goddess, Mother Posop, who was "pregnant" when the grains in the stalk filled out, illuminated many of these attitudes: "Mae Posop feels weak, hungry, and uneasy. She is eager to taste sour and sweet foods. She is a woman and beautiful in her pregnancy." To allay her hunger the 845 766 [775] 845 775 754 775 843 782 [754] 843 782 776

26. In Cambodia, a pregnant woman might be murdered, even by her husband, so that the murderer might gain the malevolent power that possession of her now double soul would afford. (E.R.E. "Cambodia": p.159). This specific statement was not found in Bang Chan but might be part of the shadowy background to local reluctance to leave a pregnant woman alone. [171]

overlap at all. Magic was wielded by men to gain power over spirits, persons, elements, and forces. It had either social or personal benefits. The role of highest social benefit, corresponding to the liang di in women, was the khwan-specialist (mo khwan) who conducted the life-cycle, khwan-strengthening (tham khwan) (for persons and for the rice) and many other ceremonies for the mature khwan. This role demanded men of the highest qualifications in probity, erudition, and personal dedication. Men also had the formulae for curing, house- or boat-blessing, invoking guardian spirits (san phra phum), etc. Men could make protective amulets to render the wearers safe from bullets, knives, spirits, and all sorts of hostile forces in the world.

On the other hand men's magical objectives could be aggressive and hostile. The gamut of amulets, missiles, love-oil, and incantations (Textor:passim) showed the potential for attack and why the converse need for invulnerability was so strong. Men had a nurturing (liang) role, but only for non-human beings, e.g. buffalo, pet birds, and guardian spirits of house and land. Subverting this role for hostile ends, they obtained possession of the ghost of a recent corpse by gathering the drop of oil at the chin, and nourishing it (liang) for use in sorcery. For a man, nourishing something gave control.

All of the powers of men's magic were available to women on request for any purpose, hostile or not, but the "owner" had to be the mediating agent.

A woman's magical knowledge was linked exclusively to her female task. It did not give power over people. It could not be destructive. No female sorceress existed in Bang Chan. No woman feared the magic of another woman in childbirth nor at any time. A woman's magic was devoted solely to promoting the processes of growth and life. Thus it controlled the searing heat of the fire, invoked the Spirits of the 4 elements, and helped at various points in childbirth. It handled the soul of the Rice Goddess and of Mother Sy, guardian of children. It restored any frail and wandering khwan to its proper bodily abode. Such was a woman's magic.

To insure separateness the respective provinces of magical activity were ringed with sanctions. Contact with a woman's skirt, undergarments, or menstrual blood completely negated any of a man's protective amulets (re tattooing, cf. Textor: 102). Though this reflected the traditional avoidance between sexual phenomena and Buddhism, it might also indicate a tacit moral evaluation of the magical powers of men and women: the powers for growth were ultimately ascendant over those for power, for men had nothing that undid a woman's powers. Though women were easily prey to men's magical control, as by

562 789 [754] [787] love philters, and they might be "sealed up" in childbirth or attacked by khun, their capacities to "liang" were inalienable. If any woman tried to tamper with men's magic, a severe sanction fell on her. She became the host of the phī krasū who lived from faeces like a dog.[59]. On the other hand in a legendary case a man who tried to perform one of the women's rites to the Rice Mother was destroyed.[60] Furthermore, the Buddhist sanction of sinfulness fell on any man using magic for evil purposes.

562 791 [755] [793] The single channel where women might operate in the men's field of curing, power, clairvoyance, etc. was as a medium (khon song), through possession by a spirit. If possessed by a male mō, she could do everything a mō could do. Men were never mediums. Bang Chan's only medium was possessed by a male mō.[61] During seances she talked and sat like a man, and gave out cures and advice to an eager clientele. Only while wearing the yellow robe of an ordained priest did a man enjoy a generalized eufunction comparable to a woman's nurturing capacity. His powers in many respects were far greater than hers, but limited in her speical province.

[832] [156] [688] [626] [593] 59. My finding is based on Textor's interesting facts (pp. 305-330). He described the hosts of phī krasū as married women ("never a maiden") in their 30's or 40's, who were "invariably" trying to learn love magic. Such women were, however, violating their sexual function as nurturant and worse, their status as "auk" women, ritually established by the holy fire! Ostracism by the community, implemented by fear of contagion through spittle, lasted even unto the deathbed. The phī krasū's daughter alone was immune while giving the devoted care which was every mother's due in her old age, for Bang Chan desired no alienation of this filial duty even out of fear of the terrible sanction on the mother.

[539] [776] 60. The legend ran that once a man instead of a woman went into the rice field to perform the ritual inviting of the Rice Goddess to stay there and be cared for with food and offerings during her pregnancy. The goddess he met was not an immature and tender child-like spirit, but the adult, pregnant being who was powerful, flirtatious, and frightening. Dazzled by her beauty he fell in love with her, and ran away with her, vanishing forever. The goddess, affronted because an improper person arrived to deal with her, destroyed him.

[825] [787] 61. In Bangkok, monkey, cats, or spirits may also possess women.

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established midwife who was a "close relative."

Sometimes the interest arose in young people. A girl started at 15 to accompany her mother, a midwife, as helper and delivered her first case alone (an emergency) at 20. A boy of 15 also helped his mother's sister, who was a midwife. Later, when married, he delivered some of his own children, but denied that he ever intended to take up the calling. One young man in his 30's, was seen going "as a team" with a well known old mɔ̄ who directed him in the manual operations but who did not ever touch the woman himself. He also assisted one of the female midwives, but had not yet delivered a baby alone.

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The first child delivered by anyone was always the child of a close kin. Only with success at this first delivery would a person even consider doing it again. The second case, and the next few were confined to the potential midwife's close relatives, children (lūk), grandchildren, and the children of siblings (lān). Thus, the skills were validated within the kin circle before a midwife felt ready to practice outside.[69]

With success, a person of developing skill might be willing to include non-kin in his clientele, i.e. become a professional. One resolved only to help relatives but her "fame spread." As another said, "seeing it was safe, I was encouraged to go on." By this time, magical formulae had been

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69. Daughters-in-law were within the validating circle if circumstances were "convenient"--i.e. if their own mothers did not deliver them and if they lived with their husband's people. No witchcraft was feared between women. A mɔ̄ in his specialty also had to validate his skills within his close kindred before non-kin would call on him. A reputation began at home.

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4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

152 571 ritualized, ways of expressing hostility. What is significant about these particular procedures is that their very formalism serves to keep the aggression controlled and within bounds. Thus, everybody knows precisely how to behave when a buffalo disappears in the middle of the night and an intermediary arrives the next day to arrange the price for its return. Similarly, the aggressor, his victim, and everyone else present knows what is meant when someone calls a dog by the name of a person who is within hearing range and claims it was simply a slip of the tongue. The victim might respond by stealing his antagonist's boat and returning it a few weeks later, after his adversary has suffered sufficient anxiety. Note that in all these cases a face-to-face confrontation is either avoided or concealed.

152 571 954 Related to the above is the use of magical aggression. Textor (1960) points out that magical aggression—from one *person* to another *person*—is on the wane in Bang Chan. Also, it is clear from his exhaustive inventory of the magical practices in the village that interpersonal aggression has a very minor part in what is otherwise an extremely elaborate belief and ritual system: there are no more than three or four supernatural "objects," out of more than one hundred and seventy, that even suggest witchcraft, and although these objects are considered highly potent, they are rarely used. Even in the most extreme case—a young man using the oil from the chin of a corpse to induce hysteria in a maiden who has rebuffed his advances[9]—the victim is held partially responsible for having succumbed to the magic, a consideration that diminishes the "magical" implications of the ritual.[10]

152 762 Finally, a word should be said about the most convoluted way of expressing aggression. This is suicide, a procedure which, obviously, is applicable to only a small number of people. Nevertheless, during the relatively brief period that I was in the field, three Bang Chaners (out of a population of 1,771) attempted to do away with themselves by hanging. They always selected a conspicuous place (a tree on the Minburi highway or over the main canal) and were always unsuccessful. The aggression here is convoluted not only because it is turned inward, but also because it is

[9] This blending of sex and aggression does not have the same meaning in Bang Chan as it has in the West. Although the young man is concerned with punishing the girl for not responding to him, he is more concerned with breaking down her defenses and equilibrium, the very factors which denied him access. In English terminology, he wants to "unhinge" her, with all the duality that such symbolism might imply.

[10] While magical aggression between people is relatively minor, magical means of averting aggression by non-human forces is not. In fact, the largest number of magical practices in Bang Chan relate to protecting the health and welfare of the organism from malevolent spirits, accidents, and dangerous animals. These data, of course, are quite consistent with the SCT data on "anxiety," presented in the preceding section.